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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by teachers at both elementary and secondary school levels, this booklet is designed to provide suggestions and writing activities that can promote positive self-concepts. Among the topics discussed in the booklet's various sections are the following: (1) teacher attitude; (2) things to consider when planning and carrying out assignments; (3) evaluation of student writing; (4) activities for students at the elementary school, intermediate grade, and high school levels; (5) journal writing; (6) journal writing starters; and (7) sharing students' writing in class. In addition, the booklet contains a 12-item bibliography and lists of resources. (FL)

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A GUIDE TO
BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH WRITING

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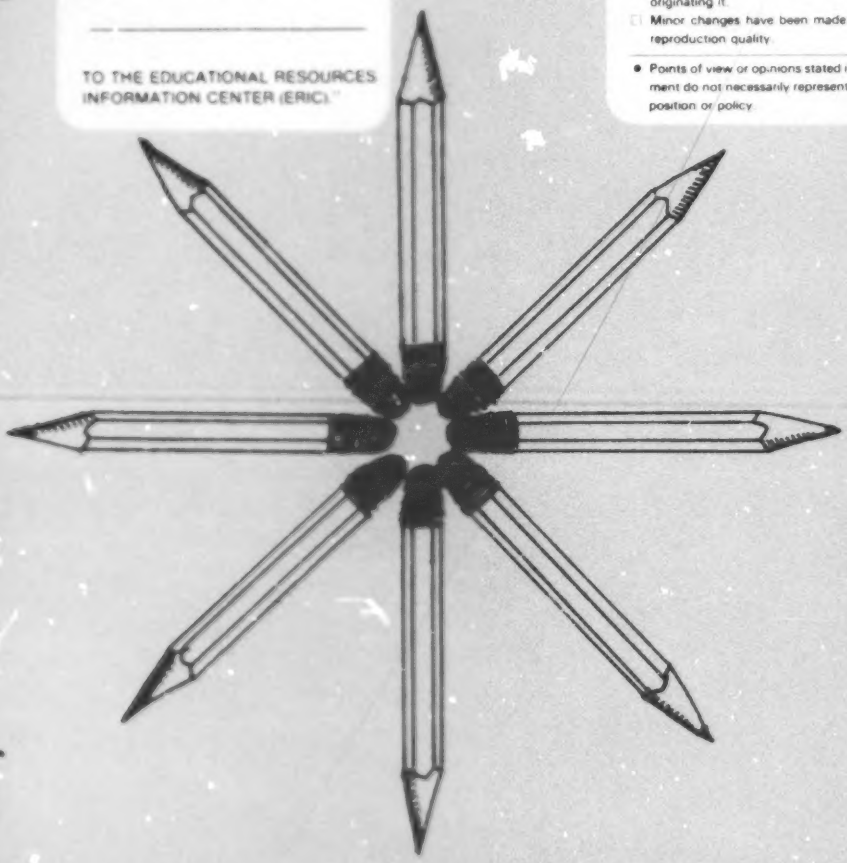

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WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT 1983

A GUIDE TO

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

THROUGH WRITING

Nancy Crassweiler
Kay Dries
Ann Hoffmeister
Geral Krause
Deb Leschensky
Michelle Matysik
Paul Olson

Edited By

Linda Christensen
Lori Hamann
John M. Kean

WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT 1983

University of Wisconsin-Madison
School of Education

WISCONSIN WRITING PROJECT 1983

PROJECT DIRECTOR: John M. Kean, Professor
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

PROJECT COORDINATORS: Linda Christensen, Lori Hamann
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

PROJECT SUPPORT STAFF: Susan J. Graves

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Nathan S. Blount, Professor
Chairperson, W.W.P.
UW-Madison

Bonnie Faust
Oregon School Dist.

Steven Fortney
Stoughton Public Schools

Phillip Helgesen, Dist. Adm.
Oregon Public Schools

Margaret Jensen
Madison Metro. School Dist.

Robert Kellner
Wisconsin Dept. Public Instr.

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D. D. Mortimer, Dist. Adm.
Columbus Public Schools

Martin Nystrand, Professor,
UW-Madison

Walter S. Plaut, Professor
UW-Madison

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Columbus Public Schools

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EX OFFICIO

Lewis Bosworth, Assoc. Dir.
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UW-Madison

Peter J. Burke, Exec. Sec.
Wisconsin Improvement Program
UW-Madison

Blair Matthews, Asst. to
Vice Chancellor
UW-Madison

The 1983 Wisconsin Writing Project guidebooks are dedicated in the memory of Bob Kellner whose ardent interest in writing served as a motivating force to all people with whom he shared his ideas--both teachers and students alike. He will be remembered, not only for his contributions in the area of language arts, but also for the warm regard he showed to so many people.

Bob Kellner

DPI Language Arts Consultant

1940 - 1983

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Do You Remember.....

.....how your teachers would have described you as a student?

.....what was your favorite class?

.....what made it your favorite?

.....what comments your teacher gave you?

.....who was your favorite teacher?

.....who was your least favorite teacher?

.....what they said or did that made a difference?

.....what was your most embarrassing or troubling moment in school?

.....if you would have gone to one of your teachers for help?

And today.....

.....how do you describe your students?

"If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn."
"If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns to be confident."

.....is your class a favorite with students?

"If a child lives with friendliness,
He learns that the world is nice place
in which to live."

.....why or why isn't it enjoyed by students?

"If a child lives with honesty and fairness,
He learns what truth and justice are."

.....what comments do you make to your students?

"If a child lives with praise,
He learns to be appreciative."

.....do your students consider you a good teacher?

"If a child lives with recognition,
He learns that it is good to have a goal."

.....what have you said or done that makes a difference?

"If a child lives with approval,
He learns to like himself."

.....can you share your embarrassing or troubling moments with students?

"If a child lives with sharing,
He learns generosity."

.....do your students feel free to come to you for help?

"If a child lives with acceptance,
He learns to love."

Teacher, with what are your students living?

excerpts from "Children Learn What They Live"
Dorothy Law Nolte

I. Introduction

"For generations, wise teachers have sensed the significant and positive relationship between a student's concept of himself and his performance in school. They believed that the students who feel good about themselves and their abilities are the ones who are most likely to succeed."

(Quandt, 1970)

As teachers, we must realize how important it is for our students to feel good about themselves. Too often we lose sight of this need as we are pressed with curriculum demands, our teaching schedules, and other duties. Studies have shown that a student's performance in school relates to his concept of himself.

What do we mean by this "concept of self"? In this guide we will refer to self-concept as " ...all the perceptions that an individual has of herself; especially emphasized are the individual's perceptions of her value and her ability...the perceptions of self are largely based upon the experiences that she has had with those people who are important (significant others). Thus, such people can effect change in the individual's self-concept." (Leonetti, 1980)

The teacher is a major "significant other" in a child's developing self-concept. Consequently, we need to be aware of the subtle effects we have on that development. One important part of this growth is the ability to express oneself in a variety of ways. During the school year, we can give our students many chances to share a part of themselves and explore new ways of thinking through writing assignments.

The focus of this guide is to provide teachers concerned with self-concept some suggestions about the role of the teacher, positive evaluation techniques, and various student writing activities.

II. Rationale

This booklet contains many activities chosen specifically because they allow the student to explore who he is and they encourage the formation of positive self-image. However, before the teacher can use specific assignments with any success, she must first see the inherent value of writing as a tool for building self-concept. Why writing, rather than oral discussion, for instance, or reading?

The writing process is more than putting thoughts on paper. Written expression is obviously different from oral expression; whereas speaking is generally spontaneous and unrestrained, writing tends to be planned and laborious. Writing is more valuable to many people; the effort is worthwhile, simply because written ideas are "retrievable" (Strong, 1983). It can be reread, reworked, reflected upon, responded to at a later time.

Yet its worth goes far beyond the aspect of retrievability. The process of writing has advantages over the process of speaking. Writing is more than talking recorded in ink or thoughts etched on paper. The process is one of interplay, in which thoughts generate and modify writing, and the act of writing in turn modifies and generates more thought. The two layers of the one process build upon each other as long as the writer wishes to carry on the construction. Man does not think and then write. "He finds out what he thinks when he writes and in that process puts thinking to work and increases its possibilities." (Smith, 1982) We may study how to change a tire and believe we know all the necessary steps, but during

the actual process of changing the tire we come to discover new information about the tire, the car, and our abilities. So it is with writing. As one writer said, "I found out things I didn't know I knew." (Strong, 1983)

If a student is to build a positive self-concept, he must know himself --his thoughts, fantasies, abilities, limitations, views of the world. No matter how much positive feedback the rest of his world gives him, he needs to develop some positive feedback for himself. He fears what he doesn't know. The more clearly he sees himself, the greater the likelihood he can change what he doesn't like and feel good about what he does like. "Writing is a means--perhaps the best means--to make knowledge personal, connected, accessible to self" (Strong, 1983). Writing is accepted as a key to successful learning across the curriculum. Certainly it follows that it should be used in studying that most important subject, the self.

III. Teacher Attitude

The importance of the teacher as a positive model cannot be over-emphasized. A sense of caring and fairness can do much to promote a student's self-esteem. Since teachers spend more time with the students than most other adults (excluding parents), they are indeed a major source from which self-perception is derived. It must also be realized that students seem to sense any underlying cynicism a teacher may have about the subject matter. The first step, then, is to look at yourself from the student's perspective and begin any needed changes.

Research has shown a strong correlation between a student's academic success and her self-image. In fact Stanley Coopersmith (1976), a child psychologist, has shown that self-esteem is a better predictor of a student's future academic success than the use of intelligence test scores.

A person's self concept can be improved, but the benefits are not immediate. There is a period of time involved, since this change takes place slowly. It is also important to note that the sooner in a person's life this takes place, the easier it occurs. This guide will show you how to improve self-concept through the development of writing talent.

The following is a list of suggestions teachers can use to enhance self-esteem in the classroom. The underlying philosophy of this list is for the teacher to demonstrate that the student is likeable, and that he is important as an individual.

1. Your student's intellectual achievement and value as a person are separate entities. Make sure the student knows that you like her even though you may not like the paper she wrote.

2. Monitor how and when you communicate with your students. Check the number of positive and negative comments made to students each day. Remember to use non-verbal forms to communicate (e.g., eye contact, a light touch).

3. Develop an individual relationship with each student. Talk privately with them about feelings and concerns involving their behavior or work.

4. Be fair and consistent. Well-structured environments with definite limits help students develop self-esteem by eliminating uncertainty about expectations.

5. Allow students to help each other. Peer-editing brings out strengths the student may not have been aware of in himself.

6. Work closely with parents. Let them know their their child has done well.

7. A positive outlook is contagious! Be a positive model for your students. Show them your sense of humor. Let them know that you are a human being with the same feelings they have. Be yourself.

(Borba, 1978)
(Quandt)

IV. Things to Consider When Planning and Carrying Out an Assignment

A lack of skill training and negative teacher response to writing are related to writing anxiety. Writing anxiety is developed and maintained by evaluation from others. These statements, which summarize a dissertation by John A. Daly (1980), prove that a teacher needs to gradually lead the student into clearly defined writing situations which reduce the fear and anxiety toward writing.

Some effective suggestions for reducing writing anxiety in the classroom are listed below.

1. Reduce the standards for success or correctness. Teachers may need to lower their expectations for individual students. Give positive reinforcement for small efforts made.

2. Guarantee a successful learning experience for the child. Activities and media may need to be modified to fit individual needs.

3. Structure any new learning experience for the student so that he fully comprehends the process. Do not assume the student knows what is expected of her and give clear, concise directions. Be sure the student knows the subject, purpose, form, audience and speaker. Allow plenty of time for pre-writing, so that the student generates ideas from which to write. Again, the student must feel comfortable with the writing process. If the assignment is not clearly defined, the student will worry about what could go wrong, and will concentrate on the mistakes he might make.

4. Diminish any sense of class competitiveness by helping the student see that she only needs to compete with her own record. Don't overwhelm the student with peer competition. Help the student develop self-competition. This way she can compare her work with work she has done previously, while striving for self-improvement.

Considering these four suggestions, it is the teacher's responsibility to plan and carry out a good assignment in order that a good evaluation can be made. (Carberry, 1979)

V. Evaluation of Student Writing

There is a fine line between teaching and evaluating; both take place throughout the writing process. In giving the student suggestions for improvement, the teacher also has the opportunity to measure growth, and in evaluating for growth and achievement, there is opportunity to make observations known to the writer and to help him improve his writing through them. We use the term "evaluating" here to refer to that process which is a combination of guiding students' writing toward improvement and noting growth in writing skills. This "evaluation" can take place at any time, perhaps several times, during the writing process.

Once a clear assignment is given, the most important thing a teacher can do throughout the writing process is to identify strengths in the writing and encourage their continuation. Positive feedback leads to a positive view of the task and to repetition of those behaviors which produced the positive responses.

The best approach in helping students improve their writing is to work first on content. Focusing on mechanical errors before content is settled often leads to no improvement, or, worse, a writing "block." After ideas are clearly organized, the teacher and student together should locate a few manageable errors, beginning with those the student is most able to

correct. Then his chances for feeling successful with the revising process are greater.

It is important not only to locate the strong elements in a piece of writing, but also to describe those elements specifically so that the student understands what they are and can repeat them. The descriptive response has two distinct advantages over the judgmental response: it is less threatening and it promises greater likelihood of the student being able to repeat the desirable writing behaviors. The following example may clarify these two points:

Teacher: "This short story is excellent." (judgmental response)

Student: (unspoken reactions)
"She's just trying to make me feel better."
"She likes the gory details."
"It's not as good as Tom's."

Compare:

Teacher: "This short story is powerful because these adjectives clearly describe the character and what he does is believable for a teenager." (descriptive response)

Student: (unspoken reactions)
"It's a good idea to write from my own experience."
"Using descriptive words helps the reader see what I'm talking about."
"My story is good...I did a good job."

Don't forget: an individual's self-concept always shades how he views a judgmental comment from someone else. In the above example, the second

teacher comment helps a student feel better about himself because he is not threatened by spoken or unspoken judgments; furthermore, he knows what to do to repeat his success.

Whenever something is unclear or incorrect, a "help-me-understand" request should be addressed to the student (Lyles, 1982) rather than simply marking the problem as such and handing it back. The teacher needs to understand what the student is doing in the writing before she can describe desirable qualities to the student or help her improve. Once there is mutual understanding, the student can alter the writing to communicate more clearly. She will grow in her ability to express herself clearly, and she will feel more understood.

Some teacher/student evaluation interactions could benefit from simple stylistic changes. The teacher should transfer the focus of evaluation <u>off</u> of the student and <u>onto</u> the specific writing task which needs work. Rewording the suggestion can make a big difference in how the writer feels about the criticism and his ability to correct the problem:

> "I could understand this paragraph better if there were a sentence introducing the three main points."
>
> rather than
>
> "You didn't write an introductory sentence here."

The teacher's phrasing, beginning with "I need to know..." or "The reader needs..." rather than "You didn't..." almost always takes the writer's mind off of his own inadequacies and focuses his concentration on what the audience needs to better understand.

The guidelines, then, for helping students develop positive attitudes toward writing, are fairly simple:

1. Call student attention to that which is correct and strong in the writing.
2. Describe those strengths as specifically as possible so that the student understands them and can repeat them.
3. Emphasize specific writing tasks that can be improved rather than focus on the student's writing behavior.

Following these guidelines, however, is not always easy for most writing teachers. Longstanding habits of error-finding must be changed, and this seldom happens without effort. Also, in order to use this positive evaluation approach, the teacher must have clearly defined goals for the student; otherwise, the specific labeling of desired writing behaviors is impossible. Finally, this approach to evaluation makes the use of automatic, rubber-stamp responses to student writing virtually impossible. The teacher should arrange time, at least occasionally, for a personal discussion with the writer.

Is the extra effort worth it? Teachers who use this positive approach think so. (Lyles, 1982) After all, a student who receives his evaluated writing spattered with red marks must doubt his abilities. But the student who "uses strong action verbs" or "makes the villian seem scary" doesn't feel like a loser. He has done something right that day. And when students feel like winners, so do teachers.

The following suggestions should aid in the implementation of a positive evaluation procedure.

1. Establish clearly defined symbols to be used in evaluation. For example, the symbol sp in the margin means there is a word misspelled in that line. These symbols should be explained to students and parents at the beginning of the year. They could be printed on sheets--one to be kept in the student's folder at school, the other to be sent home to be reviewed when necessary.

2. The symbols mentioned above should also be written in chart form so that students have easy access to symbol meanings when interpreting their evaluated papers in class.

3. Private conferences should be held with individual students intermittently during the year. These conferences can be held while the other students are working on a writing assignment. They offer a good way to involve the student in the entire writing process.

4. Create a folder at the beginning of the year for each student. Collect samples of the student's writing to be kept in this folder. This cumulative folder can be used to encourage self-competition, where the student can compare her latest writing to previous things she has written. It is also an easy way for the instructor to measure growth in the student's writing skills. Also, when a child does exceptional work or seems to have enjoyed the particular activity more than usual, the teacher might ask if the student wants to add it to the cumulative work folder.

5. Eliminate the use of pen marking to evaluate student's written work. Write comments with a pencil in the margin and stress to the student that this paper is a working copy. Pencil is used rather than pen to demonstrate respect for the student's personal work.

VI. Suggested Activities

The activities below are some of the many ways to aid the student in building a good self-concept. Since the activities can be used by a wide range of age groups, the teacher who finds ways to adapt the suggestions will get the most benefit from this guide.

Some of the activities focus on the positive and negative emotions of both the student himself and others. Other activities are short, simple lessons, which allow for the student to experience success in writing. All, however, are aimed at allowing the student to sort out on paper, thoughts and feelings about self, thereby giving her an outlet to learn to accept and come to like herself.

A. Activities for the Elementary Level

1. Print a word on the board and see how many sentences the group can suggest using that word. Keep a count of the number because students will be impressed at how many sentences they can create.

2. Mount a large picture on the bulletin board. Have students write a sentence to display with this picture.

3. Make a "feely" box, putting various objects with different textures and shapes inside. Using adjectives, have the students describe what they feel.

4. Students choose nouns, verbs, adjectives from a given chart to form sentences, for example:

Determiner	Adjective	Noun	Verb	Adverb
The	confused	owls	scrurried	heartily
Some	delighted	chairs	screeched	slowly
Several	scrumptious	tigers	gobbled	happily
Nine	gallant	ropes	growled	helplessly

They might create, for example, these sentences:

The delighted owls scurried happily.

Several scrumptious ropes growled helplessly.

Sentences created can be used as Story Starters. They might also stimulate students to draw humorous illustrations.

5. Make a word sentence puzzle. Write a sentence on tagboard and cut words apart so they are puzzle pieces. When the child makes a puzzle it forms a sentence. Children may choose to create their own sentence puzzles.

6. After the teacher has read Someday by Charlotte Zolotov, the students can be encouraged to write their own "Someday" sentences or stories. The teacher should also be encouraged to share his or her fantasy "Someday" sentences.

7. Most children identity with the kind of day Alexander has had in Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst. After reading the story, the children will enjoy writing their

own story of a similar day they have imagined or actually have experienced.

8. Let each child select a card from several greeting card pictures you have saved. They may add to what they see by using their own experience and imagination to create a story.

9. Read the story, I Hate It, by Miriam Schlein. After discussion, children write their own "I hate it..." sentences.

10. Read "Excuses" by Shel Silverstein. Children will be eager to write their own excuses.

11. Read "Whatif" by Shel Silverstein. Children will enjoy writing their own "whatif" sentences.

12. Read excerpts from the book, Feeling Mad, Feeling Sad, Feeling Bad, Feeling Glad by Ann McGovern. Discussions of these excerpts lead to writing descriptions of a child's innermost feelings.

13. Language experience is a good way to encourage self-expression. Early primary (K-1) students enjoy asking the teacher for words they want to learn. The teacher writes the words on tagboard cards to be saved in the individual's word folder. Children may eventually build sentences using the words from their folder which they have had great interest in learning.

14. Silly sentence combinations provide for a comfortable, anxiety-free writing situation which is also exciting. You will need three small paper bags. Fill one bag with interesting noun phrases (on cards). Fill the second bag with verb phrases. The third bag should contain prepositional phrases. Volunteers draw one card from each bag, reading as the card is drawn. The children may want to copy their favorite sentence and illustrate it.

15. Write "Autobiopoems"- an unrhymed poem that gives each student a chance to write about himself. This is the manner in which the poem is set up.

    Line 1: Your first name only.

    Line 2: Four traits that describe you.

    Line 3: Sibling of...

    Line 4: Lover of...(three people or ideas)

    Line 5: Who feels...(three items)

    Line 6: Who needs...(three items)

    Line 7: Who gives...(three items)

    Line 8: Who fears...(three items)

    Line 9: Who would like to see (three items)

    Line 10: Resident of (your city), (your road name)

    Line 11: Your last name only

16. Assign each child a particular week when he will be the "child of the week". The week before the child is to be "the child of the week", he is given

a sheet of sentence starters to complete with his family's help. The sheet must be returned to school the Friday before the child's special week begins. Suggestions for sentence starters are.....

I have ___brothers and sisters.

My mom_____.

My dad_____.

My favorite movie is_____.

My favorite color is_____.

My favorite food is_____.

My favorite sport is_____.

My favorite cartoon character is_____.

My favorite subject in school is_____.

My least favorite subject is_____.

I have a pet_____named_____.

He likes to _____.

I love to _____, _____ and _____.

Another hobby I have is_____.

Outline the child's body on paper. Have classmates write something positive about the child on the paper. Post it in a special area in the classroom.

17. Write a short letter to the children welcoming them to school and asking them to tell you what they are thinking today, e.g., their new grade, the room, the other kids, their family. Ask them to place their

replies in the teacher's "private" mail box before the end of the day. Tell them they may write letters to be deposited in the mail box any day of the year. They soon discover the privacy of the mailbox allows them to vent their feelings freely without being embarassed by others.

18. Read If I Were In Charge of the World by Judith Viorst. After discussion, encourage students to use the story as a model to write their own version of the story.

19. Have students do a sentence completion activity. For example: I feel_____ because_____. If someone says you're_____ you should_____. When I get home from school and everyone is gone, I feel_____.

20. Set aside time after a trip, a birthday party or any special event to record what happened. Write the date of the event at the top of the page and ask the student to write what he liked best and why.

21. Set aside some time every day to have a class calendar. Ask the students to recite any events that are happening in school or in their homes. Record the students'events in their own words, and label who said it on the chalkboard. Have the students copy statements off the board and put the date on it.

22. Students can keep up-to-date personal charts in the classroom on accomplishments of "What I have done" and "What I can do".

23. To develop a sense of importance and a separate identity, have students write to a favorite sports hero or television star.

ABC	CBS	NBC
2040 Avenue of the Stars	7800 Beverly Blvd.	3000 W. Alameda
Los Angeles, CA 90067	Los Angeles, CA 90036	Burbank, CA 91505

24. To help the child get a sense of "where she's at" and "where she's going", have her find old photos of herself. Write the date or year of the event. Have the child write or dictate a short caption for each.

25. To help students recall successful activities, save samples of project work throughout the year. Put up a wire to pin the project samples on in order to make an activity time line.

26. Divide the class into pairs. Instruct each pair to write eight ways the partners are alike and eight ways they are different.

27. Have students write books on their favorite topics, for example, favorite toys, favorite school activities, favorite books, their wishes for the present and the future, their feelings.

28. Print the children's names on pieces of paper. Have them draw names. Tell them that the person drawn is their "secret buddy". They should write anonymous notes to the secret buddy telling things they admire about him. Children put the notes in a slotted box with the words "The Friendly Box" on the side.

29. Have the children trace around and cut out their two hands and two feet

on paper. Write stories on them entitled, "My Hands Would Like To..." and "My Feet Would Like To..."

30. To help students feel better about their writing, build complex sentences by combining their simple sentences, or give sets of three sentences for them to combine.

Examples: We have a big, white horse.
He lives on our farm.
He can run as fast as the wind.
*On our farm, we have a big, white horse that can run as fast as the wind.

31. For a sensory activity, make a worksheet titled, "Things I Like to...". Show large pictures of a nose, ear, lips, eye, and hand, and have the children write their responses in the pictures.

32. Make a worksheet titled, "My Favorite Things." On the worksheet, draw pictures of a T.V. set, record, baseball, Teddy bear, and apple. Make sure these are big enough for the child to write her responses inside.

33. Make a worksheet entitled, "Things That Bug (child's name) ". On the sheet draw large pictures of bugs. The child write things that "bug" them on the bug pictures.

34. Make a worksheet titled, "If I Were...". Make circles on the page. In each circle write things such as, "A building, I'd want to be...", "An animal, I'd like to be...", "A T.V. character, it'd be great to be...", "A book, I wish I were...", "Some food, I'd want to be...", "A holiday,

nothing would be greater than...", "Something small, I wish I were...".

35. Write people recipes. Have children write the ingredients that make up themselves or another student. Then write a paragraph giving the directions of how they would put the ingredients together to make the person.

36. Have the children pretend that they are newspaper reporters. Pair the students and have the partners ask three questions to be written in an article. You could list questions from which they could choose.

37. Give students a model to follow when writing. Draw a picture on the chalkboard of how the finished product should look. Give specific directions for completion. For example, the first paragraph of a book report should be indented, then write two or three sentences telling title, author, and type of book. The second paragraph should be indented, then write ten lines telling the plot.

B. Activities for the Intermediate Level

1. Have the students create a Fantasy Weekend for themselves. Money is no object and they can go anywhere they want. The only stipulation is that they can't bring anything back with them except memories.

2. For the school newspaper or newsletter, students can interview and write feature articles about teachers or other staff they come in contact with during the day.

3. Students can write thank you letters to someone that made a favorable impression on them or helped them out. Then mail or deliver the letters. (This is a good activity around Thanksgiving time.)

4. Each student should assume that he is in a position to hire people for jobs. What would he say in the following situation: "I've had trouble finding a job because I am an ex-con. Will you hire me?"

5. Discuss an "Uncareer": We spend all our time thinking of our futures and careers. But you don't work all the time. What sorts of things do you want to do in your leisure time? Write about the things you want to do in your future "time off".

6. Ask students if there are some things about their lives that they hope won't change. Have them write about the things they would like to see remain the same.

7. Ask students to write you a letter telling you why you should trust them.

8. Give the students this situation: A married couple, who are both friends of yours, are adopting an _____ year old child. Since they have no other children they have asked you for some advice. Write them a list of Do's and Don't's to follow. (The age and sex

can be changed to fit each student.)

9. Discuss "turning points": Some events in our lives are more significant than others. They're called turning points. After a turning point, our lives are different in some way. Starting school, meeting someone who becomes a best friend, moving to a new town are all examples. Think of turning points in your life. How did your life change? Choose a turning point that you would like to write about and share it with the group. Write a short story describing that turning point and illustrate it with photos or drawings.

10. Have students write about two different times in their lives:
    -a time I spoke out and was glad.
    -a time I spoke out and was unhappy.

11. Each student can think of a person they like. Have them brainstorm a list of all the things they could do to make that person happy.

12. After discussing the good and bad points about school as well as state requirements, have the students describe their vision of a "dream school".

13. During Black History Month or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday (1/15/29) or the anniversary of his death (4/4/68), discuss his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Have each student write his own "I Have a Dream" speech or essay.

14. Ask your students to explain people to an outer space creature they have just discovered. This creature has never seen humans before and can't understand them. Why do they get along with some and not with others? What makes them different from animals other than looks?

15. Given the following values, have your students rank them in an order putting their first choice as the value they see as the most important to them. Rank the list and write reasons for their first and last choices or for their top two choices.

-Knowledge	-Love and Friendship
-Health, Food and Shelter	-Skill
-Trust	-Wealth
-Power	-Honor

16. As a group, construct a daily or weekly list of positive happenings in the classroom or school.

17. Take students on a success fantasy trip. Have them close their eyes and recall the most important successful experience of their past. Open eyes and list the first thoughts that come to mind. Write a few paragraphs describing the experience. The student may take the experience further by exaggerating.

18. Have students think about the positive aspects of themselves. Write commercials to "sell themselves". The advertisements could be

intended for use on TV, radio, newspaper or any other media. Do this activity individually or in groups and share with the class.

19. Recognize the importance of students's families in their lives.
    1) Have parents or siblings write a biographical sketch of the student leaving his name out. Share these with the class and have others guess who is being described.
    2) Have students write an observation paper about something they appreciate about their family.

20. Writing realistic goals. Think of goals as a group. Have students write ones that they feel they can accomplish in a specific period of time. When a student reaches her goal, place her name on a bulletin board such as "Reach for the Stars".

21. Have students write an itinerary of a fantastic trip upon which they are bombarded with only successful experiences. Include these in the itinerary.

22. Write a nominating speech for a classmate electing him to a specific class office or a silly class duty. Obviously, the speech will emphasize only good qualities of the "student-elect".

23. "In Praise of Students." As a group discuss positive contributions and good work of classmates. A peer should write a news story about a student in the room. This could be sent to the local newspaper, submittted

to a school newsletter or placed on a bulletin board to recognize the individual accomplishments of children.

24. Use unfinished sentences to help students explore their own attitudes, beliefs, interests, likes, dislikes or values. The following is a sample of some appropriate questions to use in this exercise:

1) I would be willing to physically fight for_____.

2) I feel best when poeple_____.

3) I trust those who_____.

4) The happiest day of my life was_____.

5) The hardest thing for me to do is_____.

6) When I'm alone at home, I_____.

7) I get angry when_____.

8) I am proud of_____.

A student may wish to expand upon what is written in just one sentence. Encourage him to explore his thoughts further. More examples:

9) My best friend can be counted on to_____.

10) My bluest days are_____.

11) I can hardly wait to be able to_____.

12) My children won't have to _____because_____.

13) I believe_____.

14) My advice to the world would be_____.

15) Secretly, I wish_____.

25. Collect emotion pictures of people from the newspaper or magazines. Randomly hand them out and have students write what they think are the thoughts and feelings going through that person's mind. Share the pictures and what was written with the class.

26. Ask the students to come up with two sets of reasons:

    -What are some of the reasons why children run away from home?

    -What are all the reasons you can think of for not running away from home?

27. Have the students write about their families. Do they like their places in their families? Do they have enough or too many responsibilities? Do they feel they have a good relationship with each parent, with their siblings? Do they have an extended family? What is the best thing about their family?

28. Let each student create her own personal entry for the Guiness Book of World Records.

29. Have students pick their favorite TV show and write a script including themselves in a weekly segment.

30. Have students think of a time when they wished they had told somebody something. Have them write the note they wish they had written then.

31. Let the students imagine they have been asked to come up with a new

grading system for the schools in the community. What would it be like? (This could be done individually, in small groups, or as a class. Why not let students present these ideas to your principal or a school board member for some feedback?)

C. Activities for the Secondary Level

It is generally accepted that writing assignments presented in isolation are less effective and successful than those produced in conjunction with other classroom experiences. Therefore, some of the activities for secondary level students are specifically related to something else happening in the class, such as a history topic or literature readings. Where such a direct relationship is not made, the teacher should attempt as much as possible to establish a relationship between the writing activities and other classroom activities.

Literature-related activities

1. When the student is learning about setting, have her describe an ideal spot (real or imaginary) and explain why it suits her so perfectly. What does the place tell her about herself?

2. After reading about a character who triumphs, have the student write about his own triumph (at school/in the family/in a social situation).

3. After reading about a character who fails, have the student write about one of her own failures in short-story style: Show a character failing and then show a second version in which she succeeds. The character's behavior should change rather than the circumstances.

4. Following the reading of a good character sketch, have the student do a personal profile of himself...or do two, one a "normal" profile and the other as if an admirer were writing it.

5. After reading short stories, the student could write her own short story using herself as a hero. She should plan which of her personality characteristics would result in heroic behavior.

6. Have the student describe a situation in which he overcame a self-doubt as does a character in a story.

7. After reading about a character whose behavior is the result of stored-up negative feelings, have the student describe a specific incident or a common situation in which her behavior appears to be the result of similarly repressed negative feelings.

8. After reading about a character who set a particular goal for himself, have the student do some goal-setting of his own. He should describe what he would like to be/do/have, how he would go about achieving the goal, and why the goal is worth reaching. (What will it give him in exchange for the sacrifices which he will make?)

9. Have the student look at a fictional character and describe how she is like/unlike that character. (This is especially good for comparison/contrast.)

10. Have the student analyze friendship in a particular piece of literature (a good example is Of Mice and Men), describing what the characters have to give each other. Then have him describe one of his friendships, dealing with the questions, "If we all need people, what do I need from someone?" and "What do I have to give to someone who needs me?"

11. After reading poetry, have the student analyze metaphors and write some of her own about herself. She should include herself as the first half of a metaphor (e.g., I am a weeping willow) and then explain why she made that connection.

12. Have all students read a short story only as far as necessary to have a clear picture of characters and conflict. Then each student should write his own finish for the story and compare his completion with those of other class members. What does his version tell him about his view of things when he compares it to others?

Descriptive and narrative composition activities

13. The student should choose an object which symbolizes a success of hers and write a descriptive paragraph emphasizing vivid sensory words.

14. When writing a description of a person, the student can choose the

person he most admires or would like to emulate. In the way he chooses to describe that person he should make clear to the reader what traits are so admirable to him and why.

15. For a narrative writing assignment the student could describe an incident she was involved in, but have her describe it from more than one perspective (fear, anger, humor, etc.). Which perspective felt most "honest" for her?

Activities applicable to curricular areas other than language arts

16. Have the student fill out an index card at the beginning of the year with pertinent personal information (name, address, etc.) and answers to all different questions about himself: What color are you? What's your favorite food? What do you like to do in your spare time? etc.

17. Have the student pick a current issue (for example, feminism) and consider the different approaches she would have to take if she were presenting a talk on that issue to a variety of groups (National Association for Women, National Anti-Feminist League, Society of American Historians). She should then write an explanation of which approach feels most comfortable to her. What does that tell her about herself?

18. A student can keep a daily or weekly learning log for any class. He can include understanding, confusions, facts learned and points missed. At the end of a unit, he can write a general summary of what he has retained.

19. Students can take turns keeping a daily log for the class to be read at the beginning of each session. If it is kept short (2-5 minutes) this kind of writing is a good chance for even the most insecure writer to produce writing which will be acceptable to her peers. It also allows the more creative students to try something unusual and share it with others.

20. After studying the political or social beliefs of an historical figure, the student can describe how his would have been similar or different in that same time period. He should explain why he would think/feel/behave as he describes.

21. During an expansive research project requiring library work, help the student break the task down into manageable sections. She will feel less overwhelmed, more enthusiastic about tackling each task as it comes up.

22. Have the student write about social or historical issues from a new perspective, always including descriptions and explanations of his feelings. For example:

    -Civil rights: Describe a street or on-the-job confrontation from the point of view of another race.
    -War: Describe a battle from a general's point of view and then from a fighting soldier's point of view.

23. Brainstorm "feelings" as a group. Then have the students choose a feeling they have experienced and write how they felt and how it

influenced their actions.

24. To help students feel better about poetry, analyze the words of popular songs in order to discover the writer's message.

25. Write a contrast of abilities and limitations under the heading "I am able to .....but I can't.....".

26. Have students make a list of what they like or dislike about class. Then write the list as a letter to the teacher. Do not grade. Then write the same letter to a friend who hasn't had the class. Have peer groups compare the two forms of letters.

27. Keep a class history. Each student is assigned a day to record the class happenings. These are not graded and the notebook is left open for anyone to read.

28. After students have completed projects, peer evaluating can be done in pairs and evaluations written in a paragraph or letter format.

VII. Journal Writing

We recognize the personal journal as a special form of writing that enhances self-expression and further reinforces student self-concept. The format for this personal account could be a basic diary, a list of daily events, collection of thoughts, observations, descriptions, or short impromptu pieces of writing.

The journal is an important tool for developing self-concept, and a few suggestions should be kept in mind. First, the journal should not be corrected or actually graded by the teacher or peers. It is only a very rough draft of students' ideas. However, by using the overhead projector, superior examples of journal entries may be shared with the entire class as models for good writing. (Demeraet, 1969) This exercise will not only benefit the student whose writing is being recognized as valuable, but also inspire others to share some of their material. It is not necessary to have all the entries shared orally with the class or even with the teacher. The student should always maintain the right to decline having his journal read aloud. Finally, if a teacher keeps a personal journal and writes in it when the students are writing in theirs, the importance of this activity will be emphasized. The teacher's journal could be available for students to read. It could serve as another model. (Grummer, 1979)

The Wisconsin Writing Project's 1983 Guide to Using the Journal is an excellent source of information on journal writing in general.

VIII. Journal Starters

There are days when an open writing time isn't productive because the thoughts don't "flow". The following ideas and questions can be used as starting places for journal writing, class writing assignments, or class discussions.

1. What kind of person do you want to be in 20 years?
2. What you you think your life would be like if you couldn't see (hear, taste, smell)?
3. If you could live anywhere you wanted, where would you be?
4. If you could live in another time in history, when would you choose?
5. What would you do with one million dollars?
6. Instant Replay: What moment would you like to relive?
7. What is the secret to having friends?
8. What are the three nicest things others have said about you?
9. Tell about three things you are good at doing.
10. What are six things you are thankful for?
11. What do you think others like and dislike about you?
12. If you were a teacher, how would you teach (sixth grade)?
13. What is the best thing that ever happened to you?
14. Tell about your favorite book.
15. What are three things you are afraid of?
16. What is your idea of a perfect Saturday?

17. What things do you like about your best friends?

18. What did you enjoy about this week?

19. What are your thoughts about the conservation of natural areas?

20. What do you think is the greatest problem in the U.S. today?

21. If you had three wishes, what would they be?

22. List as many ways as you can explaining how conflicts between people get started.

23. List ways that peace can be made between people.

24. How do you feel when someone you trust breaks a promise?

25. What do you think about a person who takes credit for something someone else has done?

26. Why do you think so many people never want to try anything new?

27. What kind of surprises are unpleasant?

28. What do you think about people who only do things if they get paid for them?

29. Why do you think people are afraid of someone who looks or acts differently?

30. What do you do when you're bored?

31. What would you do if your teacher were gone and you were on your own?

32. Write about your thoughts, fears and questions concerning death.

33. How do you handle anger?

34. What are the three most important things in your life?

35. How would you describe your family?

36. If you had only 24 hours to live, how would you spend that time?

37. If you could make a change in your life now, what would it be?

38. What have been some of your strongest feelings lately, and what caused these feelings?

39. When have you told a lie and not regretted it? When did you tell a lie and were sorry afterwards?

40. What is the best thing about people?

41. What is the ugliest thing you know?

42. On what basis do you select your friends?

43. What is the greatest crime one person can do to another?

44. If you could smash one thing, what would you smash?

45. What do you want to be doing ten years from now?

46. For what do you think you would lay down your life?

47. What emotion is strongest in you?

48. What would you put on your gravestone?

49. What is your biggest worry?

50. What is the most beautiful thing you have ever seen?

51. What person has influenced your life?

52. What would you like to be talented at that you are not now?

53. When do you feel most lonely?

54. When do you sense being alive the most?

55. If your home was on fire, what five things (in addition to the members of your family) would you save?

56. What institution is most in need of changing?

57. How would you describe a sunset to someone who has been blind since birth?

58. When you think about growing old, what feelings and thoughts do you have?

59. Write down a goal you want to set and work to accomplish this week. Keep track of your progress and evaluate your success or failure at the end of the week.

60. What's the best thing that happened to you this week? What's the worst?

61. What kind of worries do parents have which they hide from their children?

62. What kinds of privacy do you think children should have? Why?

63. What things cause arguments between parents and children? How can these be resolved?

64. It's no fun being "put down" by anyone - especially adults. What "put downs" bug you the most?

65. If you were the leader of a group and one person refused to follow any rules or do anything, what would you do?

IX. Hints for the Teacher: Sharing Children's Writing in the Classroom—Orally

When a student's written work is read aloud, the teacher and his classmates have an important role to play in showing acceptance of the work. A student will feel important and good about herself if her teacher and peers accept and regard her writing as important.

The following are just a few suggestions that you as a teacher can follow to show your approval of children's writing products. You must show enthusiasm for what is being read. This can be done by making it clear that you are listening to and appreciating what is being read. There must be positive reinforcement from you after each reading. You should recognize specific good qualities in an individual's work and use these as models for the rest of the class. However if you feel the need to point out errors, a useful technique is to use a "sandwich effect", interspersing positive with negative comments. Begin with a positive observation, then insert a suggestion to improve the piece and end with another positive aspect of the writing.

A child as peer evaluator needs to learn to react in a positive manner and to realize how effective his comments will be to the vulnerable classmate waiting to hear acceptance or rejection of his work. If his reaction is negative, then your favorable comments are counteracted. The teacher may need to enforce a "Positive Comments Only" rule during discussion of individual writing products. If you reinforce peer's positive comments

with favorable comments of your own, the children will soon find this oral sharing a very worthwhile experience.

X. Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism,

he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,

he learns to fight.

If a child lives with fear,

he learns to be apprehensive.

If a child lives with pity,

he learns to feel sorry for himself.

If a child lives with ridicule,

he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with jealousy,

he learns what envy is.

If a child lives with shame,

he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with encouragement,

he learns to be confident.

If a child lives with tolerance,

he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with praise,

he learns to be appreciative.

If a child lives with acceptance,

he learns to love.

If a child lives with approval,

he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with recognition,

he learns that it is good to have a goal.

If a child lives with sharing,

he learns about generosity.

If a child lives with honesty and fairness,

he learns what truth and justice are.

If a child lives with security,

he learns to have faith in himself and in those about him.

If a child lives with friendliness,

he learns that the world is a nice place in which to live.

If you live with serenity,

your child will live with peace of mind.

With what is your child living?

Dorothy Law Nolte

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Wisconsin Writing Project Participants

Summer 1983

Margaret A. Amberg
Douseman Elementary School

Barbara C. Arntz
Westside School, Sun Prairie

Sally Bertelson
Stoughton Middle School

Sandra Christensen
Washington Elementary, Beaver Dam

Tom Claridge
Van Hise Middle School, Madison

Nancy Crassweiler
Stoughton High School

Kay Dries
Johnson Creek Elementary

Ann Hoffmeister
Maple Grove School, Verona

Don Hudson
New Glarus High School

Joan Hue
Bird Elementary, Sun Prairie

Susan Johnson
Kennedy School, Madison

Charlotte E. Johnston
Verona High School

Geral Krause
Verona High School

Ray LaPoint
Jefferson Middle School, Madison

Deborah Leschensky
Sauk Trail School, Middleton

Michelle Matysik
Markesan Middle School

Sharon Oelstrom
Whitman Middle School, Wauwatosa

Paul J. Olson
Kromrey Middle School, Middleton

Marion Onesti
Wauwatosa West High School

Peter Otto
Section Elementary School, Mukwonago

Mary Rose Redlich
Bird Elementary, Sun Prairie

Sue Reget
Verona High School

Thomas Reiter
Verona High School

Rita Richardson
Juda High School

William R. Rodriguez
Memorial High School, Madison

Kathleen Scott
Juda School

J.C. (Jan) Smart
Madison

Beth Torrison
East High School, Madison

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Individuals desiring information concerning the Wisconsin Writing Project should write to:

Wisconsin Writing Project
554 Teacher Education Building
University of Wisconsin
225 North Mills Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
(608)263-4660